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Richard DeBolt
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How A Bill Becomes A Law In Washington

Representative
Richard DeBolt



Representative
Richard DeBolt

Republican Floor Leader

Dear Friends,

When terrorists attacked New York and Washington, D.C., our hearts and prayers went out to those touched by the tragedy. The implications of this catastrophe then spread, and our economy suffered a blow. Although it may be difficult, we have many reasons to stay positive in this time of uncertainty. This area has faced similar economic downturns in the past 30 years and we will build on those experiences.

The first lesson we must remember is that this state has a responsibility to care for its most needy citizens. And, second, this isn't the time to raise taxes. In June, the Democrat-controlled Senate presented a budget that remembered one of these rules but forgot the second. And that has already caused a bit of unraveling. At the current rate of spending, the state general fund stands to be almost \$3 billion short for the entire 2003-05 budget cycle.

The upcoming 2002 Legislature will have some tough decisions to make in January. And, that process will most likely be followed closely by the news media. I have included in this newsletter a guide to assist you in deciphering the sometimes-confusing reports of the process of making laws and developing budgets in Washington.

Thank You,

Richard





The Legislative Process

You choose representatives to carry out the difficult task of determining what kind of laws and policies will best serve your interests.

The objective of the Legislature is to reach a consensus on a wide range of issues affecting every citizen and the future prosperity of Washington. It is a process that involves cooperation to make critical decisions in everyone's best interest.

To effectively perform their job, legislators rely heavily on input from a wide variety of different sources.

I receive a great deal of technical information from my staff, state agency personnel, and professional lobbyists. Yet, much of what I actually decide depends on the views, interests and preferences of you, the citizens who elect me.

This is precisely how the legislative process was designed to work best. It is based on rules and regulation but more importantly, an open and positive relationship between elected officials and the citizens they represent.

Legislators, both Republican and Democrat, regularly see professional lobbyists and state agency representatives testifying during the session. Unfortunately, we rarely hear from the citizens of our district.

Would you be willing to come to Olympia and testify before a legislative committee?

☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, on what issues? _____

Your name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Please detach at the dotted line and send this survey back to:

Rep. Richard DeBolt
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

How a Bill Becomes a Law

House

Member of the House introduces a bill

Speaker of the House assigns it to a committee or directs the House to act upon it immediately without being referred to a committee

In a committee, the bill may be:

- Scheduled for a public hearing
- Amended, or have no action taken. *If no action is taken, the issue "dies in committee"*
- Approved or transferred to another committee
- Defeated – *the issue is then "dead in committee"*

If a bill is approved in committee, it then goes to the Rules Committee. This group of legislators decide if the bill is approved for floor debate.

Once the Rules Committee places the bill on the Floor Calendar, it is brought up before the full House of Representatives. Members debate the merits of the proposed legislative and then vote yes or no.

If the bill is defeated, it is considered "dead" for the current session, or year, but it can be reintroduced the next session, or year.

If the bill is approved, it is sent to the Senate where it is subject to the same process, but it retains its same number. (ex: HB 1234)

If the House is voting on a Senate bill, and it approves the proposal, it is sent to the Governor. If the Senate bill was amended, or changed, by the House, it must be returned to the Senate for concurrence, or approval, before it is sent to the Governor.



Senate

Member of the Senate introduces a bill

President of the Senate assigns it to a committee or directs the Senate to act upon it immediately without being referred to a committee

In a committee, the bill may be:

- Scheduled for a public hearing
- Amended, or have no action taken. *If no action is taken, the issue "dies in committee"*
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If the bill is defeated, it is considered "dead" for the current session, or year, but it can be reintroduced the next session, or year.

If the bill is approved, it is sent to the House where it is subject to the same process, but it retains its same number. (ex: SB 4321)

If the Senate is voting on a House bill, and it approves the proposal, it is sent to the Governor. If the House bill was amended, or changed, by the Senate it must be returned to the House for concurrence, or approval, before it is sent to the Governor.



Governor

If acting on a bill, the Governor may sign it into law, or veto all or parts of the legislation. The governor can also allow the bill to become law without signing it. This happens if the governor takes no action within a certain number of days. If the governor does veto all or part of a bill, it is sent back to where it started along with reasons for this action. If both the House and the Senate approve overturning the veto by a two-thirds margin, the measure becomes law without approval from the governor. If not, the bill is considered "dead."

What You Can Do

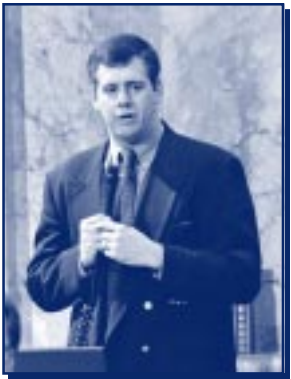
You don't have to come to Olympia to participate in the legislative process. Just select from the variety of ways that allows the fullest expression of your personal interest and commitment. Here are some suggestions:

Know How the Process Works

To maximize the effectiveness of your participation, it's important to have a basic understanding of the legislative picture. I hope this publication helps you and your family gain a better perspective of how things work in Olympia. If there is something you don't understand, or you would like a publication suitable for sharing with young children, just call or write my office.

Make Yourself the Expert

Before you address an issue, do some homework. Know the whole issue: who it affects, what others feel about it, how it will influence future trends, and other information you are able to gather. The Internet remains a great resource and thorough research allows you to present a viewpoint with confidence and credibility. Combined with personal experience, this can be a powerful tool in speaking with lawmakers, especially those whose views may not coincide with yours. This time spent on research is also a great example for your children.



Get to Know your Representatives

Personal Visit: Call my office, or introduce yourself if you see me in the area.

Write a Letter: Express your views to a matter through the mail. Include contact information so I can call you with any questions

Call the toll-free hotline: During the session, you can call 1-800-562-6000 to leave a message on any issue.

